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ARBITRATION AND MEDICAL STAFF PRIVILEGES

If a hospital promulgates a medical staff bylaw that requires a physician to agree to participate in arbitration as a condition of membership on the medical staff, will the courts enforce it? As with other issues discussed earlier, there are a number of balances the courts must weigh. On the one hand the people of Michigan, through their legislature, have determined that the cost of malpractice insurance has increased at an unacceptable pace. The results are two-fold: the law encourages arbitration as an alternative to the classic torts system and the law provides for a severe penalty for any hospital that does not coerce or coax its medical staff into almost total participation.

On the other hand, physicians are private citizens with rights to contract freely with whomever they please. And, an individual physician's patients can gain access to a hospital only if the physician has admitting privileges. A provision in the medical staff bylaws requiring that all physicians agree to arbitrate when coupled with an individual physician's refusal to participate, could effectively restrict the use of the facilities to many citizens. These above mentioned conditions may be sufficient to give a court the necessary jurisdiction to decide the question in a private hospital. In other words, if a private hospital received Hill-Burton monies (tax dollars) for construction and then established a medical staff bylaw which offends the interests of a physician who refuses to participate, some citizens may be deprived of the use of their tax dollars which built the hospital. A court could find the requisite "state action" to assume jurisdiction.

It is my contention that if any court was asked to review the reasonableness of such a bylaw it would accomplish the necessary equilibrium of rights and duties by deciding in favor of the hospital. To decide otherwise would be terribly incongruent with the clear intent of the arbitration law and would place hospitals in a legal "Catch 22." No court would permit a hospital to be placed in such a position.

[1] *Darling v Charleston Community Memorial Hospital, 211 NE 2d 253 (Ill. 1965)*

[2] *Purcell v Zimbleman, 500 P. 2d 335 (Ariz. 1972)*

[3] *Ferguson v Gonyaw et. al. Mich. App. NW 2d (Oct. 13, 1975)*

[4] *Mich. Comp. Laws Ann. 331.422 (1970)*

[5] *Greisman v Newcomb Hospital, 192 A. 2d 817 (N.J. 1963)*

[6] *Citta v Delaware Valley Hospital Association, 313 F. Supp. 301 (E.D. Pa 1970) at 310-11*

[7] *See Davis, Kenneth Culp, Administrative Law Text, 3rd ed. (1972)*

[8] *Sams v Ohio Valley General Hospital Ass'n 257 F. Supp. 369 (N.D. W. Va. 1966)*

[9] **Hospital Week**, *Vol. 11, No. 45, Nov. 7, 1975 at 1*

[10] *Klinge v Lutheran Charities Association of St. Louis, No. 74-1994 (8th Cir., Aug. 4, 1975)*

[11] *Pollock v Methodist Hospital, 329 F. Supp. 393 (E.D. La. 1975)*

[12] *Mich. Comp. Laws Ann., 500.100 to 500.8302, ch. 30A (1970)*